

EP4 Lapps
 LETTS RB4
 ESTONIANS RG4 ●

The History of Livonia.

Livonia, retaining much of the Barbarity as well as Superstitions of their Pagan Ancestors: They have nothing of their own, but are meer Slaves to the Nobility, who give them certain Allotments of Lands to Cultivate, for the bare subsistence of their Families, the overplus being reserved for their Lords, unto whom they are obliged to do certain Services at their Country Seats, in proportion of their Possessions they hold under them. It must be acknowledged that their Slavery is almost unsupportable; but the *Livonian* Nobility excuse this hard Usage with their Stubbornness, which is such, that unless they be oppress'd beyond all Hopes or Thoughts of relief, they would soon turn out their Masters, of which they have sometimes given sufficient Proof, when occasion has presented.

They are indeed *Lutherans* by Name, and there is scarce a Village but what has its own Church; but what with their Obstinacy and Perseverance in their Heathenish Superstitions, and what with their carelessness and little regard of a future State, they have scarce any thing that bears the resemblance of a Christian, except it be Baptism; for as to hear Sermons, and to go to Communion, they are scarce ever seen at it, except it be by Compulsion, or for some Interest relating to the conveniences of this Life. If they are asked the Reason, they alledge, that their Slavery and Drudgery is such, that it is impossible for them to apply themselves to Devotion. And to confess the Truth, this seems to be no framed Excuse; for considering, that besides the Daily Turmoils they undergo at Home for providing for their Families, they are obliged to do Services at the Seats of their Lords, whither they repair early in the Morning every Monday, and return not till late on Saturday Night; during which time they have scarce two Hours in 24 allow'd them for Sleep (if their Lords be good Natur'd, for the rest give them scarce any intermission) during which time they undergo such incredible Fatigues and Drudgeries (both Men and Women) in cleaving of Wood, Cultivating the Ground, Thrashing and Drying of Corn, that it is no Wonder, if they rather apply these few Hours on *Sundays* for Rest than in Devotion. This insupportable Slavery, their want of Rest, and the Badness of their Diet, being nothing else but Rye Bread, dry

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The History of Livonia.

dry Cheese and Water, is without Question the Reason, that tho' whilst the Men and Women are Abroad in their Lords Service, and lye without any distinction of Sexes these few Hours they have allow'd them for Rest in the Barres, yet they are so far from being sensible of those pleasing Motions, which are so natural to others, that it is next to a Miracle, to hear of, a Bastard begot betwixt them; unless we would attribute this Defect to the Coldness of the Climate, it being certain, that in those Parts they are more regardless in this respect than the more Southern Nations; nothing being more common here, than for Men and Women to sit promiscuously at one long Table, in order to undress themselves, before they go into the publick Bath-stoves, where both Sexes are attended only by Women; and in private Houses, both Men and Women frequently enter the Bath-stoves together, without making any great Account of the Matter.

As this Slavery renders them incapable of thinking of a future State, so all their Thoughts are bent upon this Life, tho' it be never so Miserable; which is the Reason that when they take an Oath at Law, they add this Curse, *That if they Swear False, the Curse of God may fall upon their Bodies as well as Souls, and that their Children, as well as every thing else that appertains to them, may feel the Effects of it, to the ninth Generation*: In *Esthonie*, and about *Riga*, when the Peasants are to take an Oath at Law, they put a Turf upon their Heads, with a white Staff in their Hands, intimating, that if they Swear falsely, then their Children, and Cattel may become as dry as the Turf and Stick. This as well as the putting of a Needle and Thread into the Graves of their deceased Friends, favours much of the beforementioned Pagan Superstitions of their Ancestors; but they have others, besides these, which may very well be look'd upon as the true Relicks of them. Thus they frequently perform their Devotions upon Hills, or near a certain Tree, in which they make many Incisions, and after they have bound them up with some red Stuff, offer their Prayers here, which always tend to temporal Blessings. Thus they go on Pilgrimage every *Lady-Day* to an old, ruin'd Chappel, two Leagues from *Kunda*, betwixt *Rival* and *Narva*, where they strip themselves of their Cloths; and after they have been Kneeling a while in the midst of

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the Ignorance and Carelesness of the Country Clergy; but since by the Care of the *Swedish* Kings, a Yearly Synod has been Convocated at *Rival*, for the regulation of Church-Affairs, and Examination of the Clergy-Men; it has been found by experience, that besides their unfitness for Devotion, by reason of the constant Fatigues they are forced to undergo, their ancient Idolatry and Superstition, has taken so deep root among them, as not to be quite extirpated by the Art of Man; for such is their Inclination for Sorcery, that they are of Opinion their Cattel cannot thrive without it; for which reason, Fathers and Mothers, among these Peasants, are as careful to instruct their Children in it, as we do in the Catechism and other good Morals. To elude the Effects of Charms, they never kill a Beast, or make a Slaughter, but they throw some part away, upon which the effect of the Charm is to fall; nay, they are so far entangled in Superstition, that if within a few Weeks after Baptism, the Child happen to fall ill, or pine away, they Re-baptize it, alledging, that the first Name was not agreeable to its Constitution, tho' very severe Laws have been enacted against it. The worst of all is, that they are so Tenacious of these Superstitions, and so obdurate in the perseverance of their ancient Customs, that nothing is able to divert them from it. Of this there have been several Instances of late Years; for these Peasants, as I told you before, being not permitted to purchase any Lands, but obliged to live upon the Allotments granted to them by their Lords, for the bare sustenance of their Families, will sometimes cut or burn down some Woods, and Manure the Ground, which produces good Wheat; this they hide for Sale; but if they happen to be catch'd, they are strip'd to the middle, and ty'd to a Post, where they are soundly whipt with a Swirch, till the Blood issues forth on all Sides; I say, there are many Instances of such among the *Livonian* Peasants, who rather than redeem this Chastisement by a small pecuniary Mulct of about 18 or 16 Pence, have chosen to submit readily to the Punishment, alledging, that rather than introduce any Novelty of this Kind, they would suffer the same Chastisement their Fore-fathers used to do before them.